

# Fox Theatre board meets this afternoon on new lease for 'Phantom'

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Joe Patten is at the Fox Theatre, listening to the historic venue's board of trustees deliberate on whether the 83-year-old man, known as the "Phantom of the Fox" will be allowed to remain in his lifelong home.



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Eighty-three-year-old Joe Patten has lived in an apartment he built above the Fox Theatre for thirty years but now his lease may be terminated.

His attorney, Emmet Bondurant, is not at the meeting with him. Bondurant was escorted out of the boardroom with a police officer shortly before the meeting was called to order at 5 p.m.

"He has a right to be represented by counsel," said Bondurant, standing outside of the Fox Theatre.

The board is meeting to draw up a new lease for Patten, the man credited with twice saving the historic Fox Theatre.

He has lived quietly in a stately 3,640-square-foot apartment inside the famous Peachtree Street landmark for about 30 years. His lease, signed Dec. 28, 1979, says he can live there rent-free for the rest of his life.

Patten, 83, is a diabetic and spent time in the hospital and a rehabilitation center this summer. An hour after he returned home, he received a letter from the president of Atlanta Landmarks, the nonprofit that runs the Fox, suggesting he find a nursing home.

Officials at the Fox say there has been a misunderstanding and that the board wants to create a new lease for Patten. He is not being evicted, a spokeswoman said last week.

Friends of Joe Patten began gathering outside the Fox Theatre to put "positive peer pressure" to let the man known as the "Phantom of the Fox" stay in his longtime home.

Standing behind a hand-written placard that read "Save the Phantom of the Fox; Please don't make Joe go," Barry Graham said he's hoping the group will help convince the Fox's board of trustees to allow the 83-year-old resident remain living inside the historic theater.

Graham, a friend of Patten's, organized a small protest in front of the theater.

"It's like giving someone a lifetime achievement award and saying "you did great, but since you're getting really old ... " Graham said about the board.

Shortly before 5 p.m., Patten walked from his apartment, which overlooks Ponce de Leon, around the corner to enter Fox's front office. His attorney, family and friends walked behind him.

The meeting is expected to last between 30 minutes and an hour, according to reports.

Bondurant said it will take a two-thirds vote of the board to break the current lease and draw up a new one.